

Benjamin Harrison House  
1230 North Delaware Street  
Indianapolis  
Marion County  
Indiana

HABS No. IND-53  
HABS  
IND.  
49-IND  
10-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## BENJAMIN HARRISON HOUSE

Location: 1230 North Delaware Street, Indianapolis,  
Marion County, Indiana

Present Owner: Trustees of the Arthur Jordan Foundation

Present Occupant  
and Use: Historic house museum

Statement of  
Significance: The house is the large, Italianate Victorian home  
of a successful Indianapolis lawyer and politician  
who became the twenty-third president of the  
United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1874-1876 (Harry J. Sievers, "Benjamin Harrison House", Indianapolis Star, 19 Oct. 1952, Magazine Section, pp. 6-7. Sievers is an authority on Harrison, having published a three-volume biography of him. This article may be considered authoritative).
  2. Architect: H. Brandt (Sievers, "Benjamin Harrison House"). Further information on Brandt is not available.
  3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 24 and 25 in Elijah B. Martindale's addition to the City of Indianapolis, Indiana, as recorded in Plat Book 3, p. 72, in the office of the Recorder of Marion County. The plat is dated 5 June 1867 and was recorded on 6 June 1867. On 20 Dec. 1869 the city boundaries were extended to include this addition (Deed Record Town Lots 40, p. 344, recorded 27 Dec. 1869).
- 1868 Warranty Deed 4 May 1868, recorded 11 May 1868 in  
Deed Record Town Lots 36, p. 10  
Elijah B. Martindale & Emma Martindale, his wife  
to  
Benjamin Harrison
- 1901 Benjamin Harrison died testate, 13 March 1901
- 1901 Will 20 April 1899, probated 19 March 1901 and  
recorded in Will Record Q, p. 457  
Item 14 of the will devises to his second wife,  
Mary Lord Harrison, during her lifetime the brick  
dwelling house, stable, and all other improvements  
on the property.

1937 Quit claim deed 17 Dec. 1937, recorded 8 July 1937 in  
Deed Record Town Lots 973, p. 120.  
Mary Lord Harrison, widow of Benjamin Harrison and HABS  
now unmarried IND.  
to 44-IND  
Trustees of the Arthur Jordan Foundation 10

1937 Warranty Deeds (five of them) from the various heirs  
or descendents of heirs of Benjamin Harrison by  
his first wife  
to  
Trustees of the Arthur Jordan Foundation

4. Builder or contractor, suppliers: Sievers in his article  
in the Indianapolis Star gives the following:

Petrie and Cummings, cellar excavation and stonework  
Henry Aufderheide, carpenter  
Thomas Theodore, masonry contractor for brickwork  
Johnson Bros., roofing contractors  
Shover and Christian, contractor who took over in  
Feb. 1875 to complete the house  
Tuteweilver and Sutton, interior plastering  
Builders' and Manufacturers' Association, interior  
stairways

5. Original plans and construction: H. Brandt was retained  
as architect and superintendent in mid-February 1874.  
The building permit was taken out on 25 March 1874. In  
early April 1874 Petrie and Cummings began excavating  
the cellar using teams and scoop shovels and constructed  
the foundation of limestone blocks two feet thick. Smooth-  
finished limestone was purchased for window sills and the  
decorative work of the exterior walls. By June lumber  
for door jambs and window frames had been ordered and the  
brick walls and interior partitions were under construction.  
The slate roofing was installed, and it served until 1945,  
when it was replaced. By the end of 1874 a picket fence  
was built and painted.

In 1875 Shover and Christian were given the contract to  
complete the house, Harrison no longer continuing to hire  
the various contractors himself.

The house had running water for the kitchen sink, washroom,  
and bathroom on the second floor. Illumination was by  
gas. Fireplaces were built in the house, "But there were  
also provisions for a furnace. Certainly furnace pipes  
and registers were installed." Harrison's diary of 1874  
includes mention of a furnace, but there was no evidence  
among the invoices he kept that a furnace had ever been  
installed. The furnace which heated the house until 1947  
bore a manufacturer's date of 1895. It is assumed that  
no furnace was purchased until that time.

The glass in the first-floor windows was French plate. The only embossed glass was at the front door. A burglar alarm costing \$185 was also provided.

The original landscaping included shade trees at the south side of the house and lawns. At the right (north) side of the house there was a brick carriage drive from North Delaware Street to the stables behind the house. (Sievers, "Benjamin Harrison House").

A photograph in Indianapolis Illustrated (H.R. Page Co., Indianapolis, 1889, Part 1) shows the stables with vertical board and batten exterior walls. Harrison is known for his "front porch campaign" for the presidency in 1888. The photograph just mentioned shows a porch, but it is small and is at the south side of the house off the study, not at the front. "Shadows" of this porch may still be seen on the exterior brick wall. Another photograph, published in 1893, also shows the same small porch (Ernest P. Bicknell, Indianapolis Illustrated, Indianapolis, 1893, p. 15). This side porch is certainly early, or possibly it is original with the rest of the house. It becomes apparent that Harrison conducted his front porch campaign without a front porch, or possibly from his side porch.

6. Alterations and additions: The porch had undergone several changes. At the entrance level within the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Indianapolis there are two photographs identified as Harrison's funeral procession in 1901 showing a porch at the front and side of the house, having the same extent as the present porch. But its railing is plainly a wooden balustrade instead of the present brick wall, and there is another similar wooden balustrade instead of the present brick wall, and there is another similar wooden balustrade along the porch roof. Sievers, in his biography of Harrison, states that Harrison added a new front porch when he returned after his term in the White House and that in 1895 a new stable was built also and the interior of the house renovated and painted (Harry J. Sievers, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier President; The White House and After, New York, 1968). Presently the house is maintained by the Arthur Jordan Foundation, which is endowed for such activities.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Building:

Benjamin Harrison was the grandson of President William Henry Harrison and was a Civil War brigadier general and a successful Indianapolis lawyer. He served one term as United States Senator and was nominated for the presidency in 1888. When the telegraphed news of the nomination reached Indianapolis, Harrison's neighbors gathered on his front

lawn and Frank Tibbott, his secretary, entertained the crowd until the General arrived. Harrison was moved by the approbation of his neighbors and stood on the stoop (Siever's deduction) of his house and give the first of several neighborly chats, speaking three times within the hour. Souvenir hunters then dismantled the white picket fence that surrounded the premises (Harry J. Sievers, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier Statesman; From the Civil War to the White House, 1865-1888, New York, 1959).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: The following documents are in Recorder's Office, City-County Building, Indianapolis.

Deed Record Town Lots 36, 40, 973

Plat Book 3

Will Record Q

2. Secondary and published sources:

Bicknell, Ernest P. Indianapolis Illustrated. Indianapolis, 1893.

Indianapolis Illustrated. H.R. Page Co., Indianapolis, 1893.

Sievers, Harry J. "Benjamin Harrison House". Indianapolis Star, 19 Oct. 1952, Magazine Section, pp. 6-7.

----- Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier President; the White House and After. New York, 1968.

----- Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier Statesman; From the Civil War to the White House, 1865-1888. New York, 1959.

- D. Likely sources not yet investigated: Letters and records which Sievers found at the house.

Prepared by Wesley I. Shank  
Architectural Historian  
Iowa State University  
August 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The residence is an excellent example of late 19th century monumental domestic architecture, in the Italianate style, built on the near north side of Indianapolis. Delaware Street was lined with a series of well designed examples of domestic architecture, most built in the last half of the 19th century. Now the Harrison House is one of only a few that are still extant. The house was built for Mr. Harrison in 1874-76 where he lived continuously until his death in 1901, except while he was President of the United States. The house is currently operated as a museum by the Jordan Foundation.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 51'6" x 101'0". Number of bays: Three. Number of stories: Two stories with a basement and an attic. The attic is currently being prepared to be used as a museum. Layout, shape: Irregular rectangle with a diagonal sided projecting bay on the south elevation.
2. Foundations: Rock faced stone laid up in an Ashlar coursing with a beveled cut stone cap defines the facade (east elevation), and about two-thirds of the south and north elevations. The remaining foundation walls are rough faced stone laid in a similar manner but do not have the beveled stone cap. The elevation of the stone cap is about 3'10" above the finish grade.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Dark red brick walls laid up in running bond on facade and south elevation. Bricks are 2 1/4" x 4" x 8 1/4" with 1/4" flush mortar joints. Brick work on north and west walls is similar except at projecting lower two-storied unit near northwest corner of house. Here the bricks are larger (2 3/8" x 4" x 8 1/4") with 3/8" flush joints and the coursing does not align with adjacent walls. The brick is a somewhat lighter red and this would appear to be a later addition.
4. Structural system, framing: Wall bearing system. Exterior of brick on stone foundations, interior walls are brick with some concrete block filler panels in the basement. First floor joists are 2"x 10" at about 12" on center; bearing is 9'6" above the concrete floor, resulting in very high basement spaces. Second floor framing is probably similar; however, it is difficult to accurately determine because there are no spaces where one can gain access to the structural system. It is impossible to accurately determine the size of the roof framing because the attic spaces are finished.

HABS  
IND.  
44. IND  
10.

5. Porches: Front porch (east elevation and partial south elevation) has a rock faced foundation with limestone beveled cap about three feet above finished grade. Red brick bases with precast concrete caps, spandrels between bases are recessed and also of red brick with a precast concrete cap. The brick is a different color than adjacent walls. Tonic columns of wood are set on the bases, four bays across facade and four bays on south elevation. Columns support a simple wooden entablature. Porch ceiling is tongue and groove, wood surfaces painted grey. This porch is not a part of the original construction. (Of this we can be quite certain because it is not in several photographs taken in the late 19th century.) The porch is approached by a concrete walk and 6 stone risers. Porch deck is concrete.

Porch near southwest corner of the one story porch is small in size.(about 5' x 8'). Ashlar stone piers carry a wooden deck. Two free standing columns with chamfered corners on pedestals, half columns at adjacent walls, support a simple entablature. Ceiling is wooden and composed of rectangular recessed panels. All members are wooden and are painted grey. Four concrete risers give access to the porch.

Rear porch (west elevation) is of wooden construction, one story with a shed roof. Ends of the roof joists are exposed. Porch was later enclosed with a diagonal and right angled lattice work.

There was a small one story wooden porch at the offset of the south elevation near the east front. This element can be seen in old photographs. This porch was replaced by the present front porch described above.

6. Chimneys: There are four red brick chimneys, three with corbeled caps. One is a central unit and the others are inside on the north, south and west walls. The chimney in the west wall does not have a corbeled cap.

7. Openings:

Doorways and doors: Front doorway (east elevation) has a limestone frontispiece with a few segmental pediments and brackets. The segmental pediment is crowded by the ceiling of the front porch. The opening is semicircular with a keystone and incised spandrels. Three foot deep wood paneled recess. Diagonal interlocked diamond wooden panels are superimposed on rectangular panels in the ceiling and walls of the deep recess. The main doors have etched glass lights defined by heavy moldings, lower panels have a diamond molding set in a square

panel. The doors are outlined by a semicircular frame with a single light transom. Transom bar has alternating raised flower petals and diamonds. Frame and doors are of hardwood. Floor of recess had diagonal checkerboard design of black and yellow tiles set in a narrow (3") black border. The south door at the porch near the southwest corner of the house is a rectangular wooden unit with a glass light over wooden panels. It has a glazed transom. Shed roof vestibule added with a screen door.

Windows and shutters: Facade (east elevation): Woden double hung sash painted black in simple wooden frames painted grey. Heads are defined by elaborate massive limestone triangular pediments with carved brackets. Sills are also of limestone with brackets below. The other windows on the front two-thirds of the house, first and second floor, are similar; however, the triangular pedimented heads and sills are less plastic and not near as elaborate as the facade windows. The remaining windows at the rear of the house are wooden double hung with two lights over two lights. The rectangular heads are defined by segmental brick arches. Sash and frames match the front windows in color.

Several small wooden casement windows have been introduced at the rear porch. Basement windows are fixed wooden sash or casement with stone lintels at the front of the house and brick segmental arches at the rear of the house. Wooden casement windows in frieze.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A series of three hipped roofs with a continuous ridge and flat deck at central block. Hipped elements have asphalt shingles and flat deck has a built up roof. Flat built up roof at lower two story unit on north elevation.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wooden bracketed cornice, deep frieze, windows punched in numerous frieze panels, other frieze panels of brick. Brackets only at the corners of west elevation and northwest corner of the house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

Basement: Hallway running east-west with narrow north-south stair hall. Series of rectangular spaces off of halls, spaces south of hallway are larger with greater



IND.  
44. IND  
10.

spans than those on north side of hallway.

First floor: Side entrance hall of facade with parlor to the left (south). Entrance hall opens into stairway hall, sitting room to the left (south) stairway hall opens into long central hall (east-west areas) with the library to the left (south) and dining room to the right (north). Central hall connects to a second stair hall at the left (south) and former kitchen at west. Bathroom dating from 1930's and butlers pantry are to the right (north) of the kitchen. The kitchen and enclosed rear porch are currently being used as an office.

Second floor: The stairway hall has a pair of bedrooms to the front (east) over the side entrance hall and parlor spaces of the first floor. Stairway hall connects to the long hall (east-west axis). Master bedroom (above library) on the left (south) and two small bedrooms on the right (north). Second stair hall (north-south axis) terminates long hall. Second stair hall has bathrooms at south and north. A narrow north-south hall towards the rear has a bedroom at the right (south) and one at the west.

Attic: Large space over the front two-thirds of the house with access from both stairways. This space was used as the ballroom when Benjamin Harrison resided there. Smaller space at rear (west) of second stairway.

2. Stairways: Basement stairway is an open single flight unit which becomes enclosed at first floor. It has wooden risers and treads, fifteen risers at 8-1/4", tongue and groove railing at basement and plaster walls at first floor. Main stairway: Open stairway, half spiral, from first floor to attic, with balusters and a continuous walnut railing. Massive newel post has a superimposed light standard with an etched glass globe at its apex. The stringer has ornamental brackets and a continuous bead and reel. Treads and risers are oak with a carpet runner. The second stairway is also an open stairway from the first floor to the attic and has similar details.
3. Flooring: Basement: Concrete--where exposed it is painted grey, asphalt tile brown and tan checker pattern in north-south stair hall and space to east of stair hall. First floor: Oak hardwood flooring with an inlaid border in the parlor, dining room and sitting room. The library is carpeted. The second stair hall and former kitchen have linoleum covering. Butler's pantry and rear enclosed porch have asphalt tile. Second floor: Hardwood (oak) flooring except in bathrooms. Bathrooms have contemporary ceramic tile. Attic: Hardwood flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Basement: Exterior stone walls 10. painted yellow. Interior brick walls painted the same color. Ceilings vary; plaster on wood lath, composition board and exposed wooden joists. First floor: Wallpaper on plaster walls in all spaces except the former kitchen, the butler's pantry, bathroom and enclosed porch. Wallpaper is a copy of the original. Molded plaster cornices in most of the spaces. Centerpiece of molded plaster in parlor, sitting room, dining room and library ceiling. Second floor: Similar to first floor. Rear rooms on second floor have painted plaster walls. Bathrooms have ceramic tile wainscot. Attic: Plaster walls and ceiling in the bathroom are painted white. Modern paper over plaster in west room with a plaster ceiling painted buff.
5. Doorways and doors: Basement: Brick openings in basement wall heads are segmental brick arches, and most do not have doors. First floor: 9'10" butternut doors with four tiers of six panels at sitting room stair hall opening, also a pair of similar sliding doors between entrance hall and parlor. 7'6" butternut three-tier five panel doors with glazed transoms elsewhere. These too are butternut with the exception of the doors entering into the library which are walnut on the library side. Second floor: Similar to 7'6" doors and openings at the first floor; however, most of the transoms are papered or painted. Attic: Attic doors are similar to those on second floor except that they do not have transoms.
6. Special decorative features, trim and cabinet work: The windows in the parlor, sitting room and library have butternut shutters. The hardwood wooden carved fireplaces in the parlor and sitting rooms are similar. Both have rectangular openings, wooden colonettes, frieze, and mantel shelves. The fireplace in the dining room is of dark marble with a round arch opening, paneled spandrels and simple colonettes. The fireplace in the library has a rectangular opening with rounded corners. It too is a dark marble.
7. Notable hardware: Solid brass fancy butts, knobs and escutcheons. Elements at the back of the house are less ornate and some modern hardware has been added.
8. Mechanical equipment: Heating: Modern gas fired central heating system installed in the 1930's. Lighting: Electric--many of the light fixtures, particularly the brass chandeliers in the parlor, sitting room are quite handsome. Many of the other fixtures appear to have been installed about 1910. Plumbing: All of the fixtures date from the 1930's or later. No evidence of the original fixtures. Kitchen fixtures have been removed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The residence is sited on the west side of Delaware Street. The facade is the east elevation. The rear of the house is the west elevation. The site is about 150'0" north-south by 200'0" deep (east-west). A brick driveway with stone curb cut from Delaware Street is about 20'0" from the south elevation and terminates in a parking lot to the rear, west property line. Part of the brick parking lot has been resurfaced with asphalt paving. There are a series of brick walks along the south elevation; some are in a herringbone pattern. There is a vacant lot to the north of the house which abuts 13th Street. An alley defines the west property line.
2. Outbuildings: None--however it is planned to construct a carriage house at the rear (west) property line.

Prepared by David R. Hermansen  
Ball State University  
August 1970

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a cooperative project in 1970 between the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana and the Historic American Buildings Survey. During this project, nine buildings in Indianapolis were measured and drawn, and sixteen more were recorded with professional photographs and written data.

The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Measured drawings were prepared by student architects under the direction of Professor David R. Hermansen of Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. Professor Wesley Shank of Iowa State University prepared the historical data, and Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, provided the photographic record. H. Roll McLaughlin, FAIA, State Preservation Coordinator, President of the Historic Landmarks Foundation, and member of the HABS Advisory Board, served as consultant throughout the project.